

Thanks to your generosity through the Belongathon, Sharon and her mother, Asenath, are using the new physiotherapy room at Mount Moriah School in Kenya

# Karis Celebrates

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## Spring 2026 Partner Newsletter

**Communities of Belonging—From Kenya to Ottawa.** In Korogocho, one of Nairobi, Kenya’s largest slum communities, Sharon and her mother, Asenath, have long struggled to access the physiotherapy Sharon needs to manage Cerebral Palsy. When the local therapy centre closed, the care she depended on became impossible to reach, leaving her family without vital support. **This past year, your generosity through the Belongathon changed everything.** A new physiotherapy room at Mount Moriah School is now providing essential therapy for Sharon and other children with disabilities. The space has quickly become a hub where families, educators, and community workers come together to support children’s learning, development, and inclusion. For Sharon and her family, the room represents hope, dignity, and belonging.



Kicking off Belongathon fundraising with a Polar Plunge in Ottawa that raised over \$9,000!

That same spirit of community was on full display in Ottawa on March 13, when Karis communities hosted a “Polar Plunge” Belongathon fundraiser. Nine daring participants braved the icy waters at Britannia Beach, raising more than \$9,000 for disability projects.

**June 6, 2026 will mark the fourth annual Belongathon in communities across Ontario and Saskatchewan. You can be part of this walk and roll community event and help to raise funds that make a difference for people with disabilities and their families. Scan the QR code with your phone’s camera to learn more, sign up, and donate at [belongathon.ca](http://belongathon.ca).**



## Lorraine and Carla's Stories Canada

### A Place to Find Your Voice

One beautiful snowy weekend this past January, seven families traveled to Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp in New Hamburg, ON, for a winter Family Camp. Respite services like Family Camp are in such high demand, and Karis goes above and beyond to make camp a space for quality time, faith activities, and fun.

This was Lorraine, 18 years old, and her mom, Christian's, second time at a Karis Family Camp. Both mother and daughter have a disability and benefit from the camp's inclusive and supported environment. As Lorraine moves from child services and into the world of adult services,

opportunities like Family Camp are helping her develop independence and confidence. Her two favourite parts of camp are "the food" and "sleeping." Since the last camp, she's been inspired to take on a bigger role as a leader and mentor.

**Family Camps are designed for the whole family, and it would not be possible without amazing, dedicated volunteers of all ages! Each family member with a disability and all typically developing siblings under 12 are matched with a volunteer.**

This personalized support is what makes Family Camp so special, and Carla's experience shows just how meaningful that can be. Carla is seven years old and two of her



Carla (left) and Grace (right) spending time together at the Winter Family Camp

older brothers have a disability. At Family Camp, she was matched with Grace, a high school student who was also a first-time volunteer. All weekend long, Carla chose what she wanted to do: draw, dance, decorate cookies, swing outside in the snow, and sing with Grace. She didn't have to go at the pace of her siblings or do what her older brothers wanted to do. Her brothers also enjoyed this tailored and supported camp experience with their volunteers!

## Rebira's Story Ethiopia



Horizons Academy student Rebira and his father Berhanu

### Changing Minds, Transforming Lives

In Asella, Ethiopia, Horizons Academy shines as a beacon of hope for families who experience disability. This school, through its inclusive education program, is creating a ripple effect of

transformative change. For many parents, it opens the door to employment opportunities.

Before access to inclusive education, Rebira's father, Berhanu, had to work at night and raise his son during the day, an exhausting routine that left little time for anything else. Now, 12-year-old Rebira can go to school during the day, and his father can return to his work as a teacher. Through disability support, Berhanu can get more rest and better take care of his family.

Because students like Rebira can attend school, his father also notes that now "most of the students are aware about disabilities." This shift has made a big difference in the

ways they feel supported by their community. Through education and inclusion in everyday life, people who once shunned Rebira's family now see them as a part of the community. "It's very interesting. It's changing not only those in society, but the mentality of the parents also. We are proud to have such kind of children," says Berhanu.

**Through your contributions to community partnerships, accessible education, and development, Rebira and his family can participate in everyday life, feeling safer, loved, and celebrated as people made in the image of God. Your partnership keeps this transformative work sustainable.**

## Become a Partner in Belonging

In February, after much prayer and consultation, we announced to Karis child sponsors that the individual child sponsorship program will be phased out over the coming year and transition to a monthly partnership model that supports disability-focused work worldwide and here in Canada. This model allows our in-country partners to use your gifts with greater flexibility, ensuring they make the greatest impact. Learn more at [karis.org/ChildSponsorship](https://karis.org/ChildSponsorship).



Please join with us on this journey by becoming a partner in belonging. With a monthly gift of any amount, you can help create lasting inclusion and dignity for families here at home and around the world who experience disability. Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to join now, or visit [karis.org/monthly-partnership](https://karis.org/monthly-partnership).

## Karla's Story **Guatemala**

### The Difference a Teacher Can Make

Ever since she was little, Karla always wanted to be a teacher. She is trained in special needs education and is passionate about supporting children with disabilities and their families. "What inspires me is seeing thrilled parents, being able to help their children so that they can develop," shares Karla.

Karis Disability Services partners with Escuela Rural Aldea, an elementary school in El Morro, Guatemala, an isolated, mountainous village. This partnership allows the school to offer accessible education through Teacher Karla and a resource room.

Karla says that sometimes parents have a hard time accepting their child's disability, and this was the case with one nine-year-old boy named Edgar.

His mother had received rejection from her own family and for a long time didn't allow Edgar to leave the house, not even for diagnostics or treatment. Then, Karla visited with Edgar's mother and shared with her that there were options available to her that could make her and her son's lives better. Now, Edgar is part of Karla's class and gets to go to school with his peers. Karla shares that Edgar will

even sometimes surprise her at her home with a bouquet of flowers or a chicken on special occasions. Edgar's kind heart now has a chance to shine, thanks to the programs and people you support through Karis.

Another boy in Karla's class, Elder, is also experiencing new joy and hope because of access to education. 14-year-old Elder has mobility, communication, and intellectual disabilities. At school with Teacher Karla, he can walk with more confidence and communicates through speech and sign language. He is a blessing to Karla and his classmates through his humour and his contagious big smile, expressing sincere happiness in being part of the therapy group. His parents are busy caring for six additional siblings, so Karla's committed and caring presence has been significant for Elder. His relatives express deep gratitude to Karla for the therapy and support she has provided, sharing that it has made a big difference in his life.

The area around the school has such rough and steep terrain, but recently, the community came together to build a paved road through a partnership between Karis, the village of El Morro, and the Guatemalan government. The community has made big strides in accessibility, including the



Karla in her classroom at Escuela Rural Aldea

support and advocacy of Karla. "I encourage them that despite the situation they are experiencing with their children, because it is not easy," Karla says. "I [can] help them so that they can have that motivation so that they can keep going."

**Karla is sincerely grateful for Karis' support and sees firsthand the difference it can make. "I appreciate the support given to the children, since for them ... it is the hope to move forward." Thank you for your support in enabling in-country partners like Karla to foster spaces for true belonging and uplift whole communities.**

## Celebrating the God-Given Gifts of All

When you think of December holidays, does International Day for Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) come to mind? Every year on December 3, IDPD is celebrated around the world. This day helps raise awareness about disability issues by advocating for the rights, dignity, and well-being of people with disabilities. This past December, communities across Karis Disability Services recognized this day in fun and unique ways. Here are some highlights:

**Chatham, ON:** Karis hosted a Diamond Evening Cruise dance at St. Paul's Discover Life Church, featuring nautical-themed decorations and costumes. To throw this awesome event, this small but mighty team hosted a chocolate fundraiser and brought on Nu-Co Plastics as a generous event sponsor. Supported people, along with their friends and family members, joined the seaside celebration, decked out in captain's hats and leis.



**Ottawa, ON:** The Ottawa chapter of Our Voices Matter, a group of self-advocates with disabilities, hosted a talent show where people with disabilities shared and celebrated their gifts.

**Toronto, ON:** Karis hosted a special birthday celebration for people with disabilities, including birthday hats, food, and a live DJ.

**Saskatoon, SK:** Karis invited people supported in Waldheim, Warman, and North Battleford to a party at the Saskatchewan District Office. They had high, medium, and low stimulating activities so everybody could participate, as

well as a potluck lunch.

**Waterloo, ON:** At an office meeting, Our Voices Matter West prepared a video with greetings and what they wish more people knew about disability (scan the QR code below to watch the video.) After the meeting there was a potluck lunch with cake.






**Thank you for supporting people with disabilities—and celebrating gifts all year long!**

## What Can I Do?

### Pray

Please pray for us as we transform our global giving model and as we continue working with churches and communities in Guatemala, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya.

### Connect Online

-  /karisdisabilityservices
-  @karisdisabilityservices
-  karis.org

### Donate

We couldn't do this without you!



Scan the QR code to visit [karis.org/donate](https://karis.org/donate). You can also give by mail using the enclosed donation slip, or by phone at 1-866-362-6810.

